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Conservation Organizations Oppose California Policy That Would Give Carbon Credits for Forest Clearcutting

SACRAMENTO, *Calif.*— A coalition of conservation groups today submitted a letter of opposition to a rule proposed for adoption by the California Air Resources Board later this month, urging the state agency to remove a provision that could encourage forest clearcutting as part of California's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The provision is part of the forest project protocols that would guide the assessment of greenhouse gas impacts of forest growth and harvest. One provision appears intended to specifically allow forest clearcutting to qualify as a greenhouse gas reduction method under the protocols.

The measure under consideration comes less than a year since Governor Schwarzenegger publicized his agreement to partner with other governors in the U.S. and internationally to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation in tropical forests. In that announcement, Schwarzenegger signed an MOU with the governors of Brazil and Indonesia, agreeing to "develop rules, incentives and tools to ensure reduced emissions from deforestation and land degradation."

"A clearcut is about as beneficial to the climate as a new coal-fired powerplant," said Brian Nowicki, Center for Biological Diversity. "The state should be doing everything it can to protect California's forests, not encouraging business-as-usual logging that destroys forest ecosystems while releasing carbon stored in trees and soil. It would be beyond hypocritical for the Governor to preach to other countries about the climate impacts of deforestation in their countries while California adopts rules that encourage clearcutting in our own state."

"Forest clearcutting is not a solution for achieving greenhouse gas reductions in California. Uneven aged stands will better filter our drinking water supplies, avoid erosion, restore our fisheries and provide more diverse habitats," said Michael Endicott of Sierra Club California. Rather than ignore Mom's tried and true advice – 'Don't run with chainsaws' -- we should focus on practices that are less destructive and have more chance of promoting resilient habitats. There are plenty of lands that would be available without promoting clearcutting."

"To begin to meet the threat of global warming, we need to protect the carbon stored in forests and soils, and restore the old forests and big trees that store the most carbon for the future. Right now, however, giant industrial logging corporations like Green Diamond are doing just the opposite - they are clearcutting redwoods less than fifty years

old,” said Scott Greacen, executive director of EPIC. “It’s past time that California banned clearcutting altogether: allowing carbon credits for clearcutting would encourage an obsolete and destructive practice that threatens not just clean water and wildlife habitat, but our collective future.”

“For us in the Sierra Nevada, climate change effects are already here – and happening fast. Our snowpack is melting earlier and earlier, and fire season is essentially year-round,” said Addie Jacobson, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch. “Clearcutting not only exacerbates these effects, but is a carbon emitter, not a sink, for years. California cannot pretend to lead the world in controlling climate change without ending clearcutting here in our own state.”

The conservation organization letter asks the California Air Resources Board to eliminate the forest clearcutting provision before adoption of the protocols at their upcoming board meeting on September 24.

The conservation group letter is available at:
http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/forests/clearcutting_and_climate_change/pdfs/Group_letter_to_CARB_09-17-09.pdf

The governor’s announcement of the agreement on deforestation is available at:
<http://gov.ca.gov/index.php?/press-release/11101/>

The forest protocols are available at:
<http://www.climateactionreserve.org/how/protocols/adopted-protocols/forest/development/>

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